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ABSTRACT

This paper describes how the University of Northern Iowa's San Antonio Regional Student Teaching Program developed a course to provide cultural information on Hispanic Americans for its predominantly white student teachers. The course was delivered over 2 semesters, with students doing most work in five 2-hour meetings on campus. During the student teaching semester, they implemented the ideas and activities that they had created during the course. The paper presents the course syllabus, which offers a background on Hispanics and five sessions that emphasize how to reach Hispanic students; Mexican and Mexican American culture (holidays, food, art, and music); literature for students and teachers/exemplary authors, books, and activities; Mexican American historical perspectives and Mexican American heroes; and bilingual education and other critical issues. The sessions include strategies, field trips, handouts, and assignments. (Contains 23 bibliographic references.) (SM)

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Reflecting Latino Culture in Our Classrooms
A Quick Start for Teachers

Christine Canning, Mary Salazar-Guenther, and Julio Polanco-Noboa
University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls Iowa

Association of Teacher Educators (ATE) annual meeting
Denver, Colorado, February 2002.

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C. Canning

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and nobody sees us

The flame of our blood burns,
unextinguishable
in spite of the wind of centuries.

We do not speak,
our songs caught in our throats,
misery in spirit,
sadness inside fences.

Ay, I want to cry screaming!

The lands they leave for us
are the mountain slopes,
the steep hills:
little by little the rains wash them
and drag them to the valleys
that are no longer ours.

Here we are
standing on roadsides
with our sight broken by a tear.

And nobody see us.

Poem by Humberto Ak'abal, from *Americanos/Latino Life in the United States*
Edward James Olmos, et. al., editors (1999)

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Reflecting Latino Culture in Our Classrooms:
A Quick Start for Teachers

Christine Canning, Mary Salazar-Guenther, and Julio Polanco-Noboa
University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa

Latinos are the fastest growing ethnic group in the United States. While the percentage of Latino students in the nation's public school population is growing, the percentage of Latino teachers continues to remain low and is not expected to increase dramatically in the next decade. No matter who is teaching them, however, Latinos continue to be underrepresented and misrepresented in the school curricula. Materials and images in our classrooms do not typically reflect their faces or experiences. As Latino perspectives are absent from our classrooms, Latino students themselves are becoming absent from them. Latinos have the highest drop-out rate of any major segment of the U.S. population and theirs are among the lowest achievement scores.

It is important for Latino students to see themselves reflected in positive ways so that they develop self-esteem for the persons they are and self-images of success. When students see themselves in school—their histories, heroes, customs, and issues—they are more likely to feel included and to envision for themselves a future in school. It is important that our Latino students develop pictures of themselves as included in productive, empowering citizenship. At the same time, it is important for all our students to see Latinos and Latino perspectives reflected in their schools so that Latinos do not seem like foreigners and so that all our students develop expectations of a productive citizenry which includes Latinos.

Since most teachers and most teacher education students have not been in schools where Latino cultures and perspectives have traditionally been included in intentional ways, they may not even recognize that Latino perspectives are missing or that Latinos may be misrepresented in their teaching as well as in the public media. If they do want to be inclusive, they are probably unprepared to actually be so.

This was the case for virtually all of the student teachers who were entering the University of Northern Iowa's San Antonio student teaching program a number of years ago. Two of us, Christine and Julio, have worked together with student teachers there since 1994. Julio said over and over to Christine, "If only our student teachers could be at least somewhat prepared before they get here. We can't do it all during student teaching." Then, not having overheard Julio, Mary, a third grade teacher in UNI's laboratory school, came to Christine wanting to do something on campus to support the San Antonio student teachers as well as to advance curricular activity with regard to Latino perspectives. What we came up with is work we all do together, albeit in separate locations.

Mary, in collaboration with Christine, designed a course to give student teachers a quick-start with regard to Latino culture and perspectives. When we began teaching this course, it was for only those who would do their student teaching in San Antonio. The one-hour credit course was delivered over two semesters. Students did most of the work in five two-hour meetings on campus with Mary the semester before student teaching. During the student teaching semester with Christine and Julio, they implemented their ideas and the activities they had created with Mary, and they attended Latino events in the student teaching community. Beginning with this semester, the course is open to any student on campus and it will be delivered in one semester.

We—Christine, Julio, and Mary— have come from very different backgrounds, and working together has been a source of strength for each of us. Our various perspectives model multiple

perspectives for our student teachers, and each of us has something to offer them as we contribute to their teacher preparation.

> Christine Canning is an "Anglo" who was raised in exclusively White neighborhoods and schools and is now the student teaching coordinator for the UNI San Antonio Regional Student Teaching Program. When she began working with UNI student teachers in San Antonio in 1993, she was faced with the need to provide what was missing from her students' as well as from her own preparation, information about Latino cultures and issues.
>
> Julio Polanco-Noboa is Puerto Rican and was raised in a mixed neighborhood in Chicago. In his elementary and secondary schooling, however, he missed seeing those like himself and the Puerto Rican perspectives in the curriculum and therefore felt invisible in public school. Julio left school to go on to higher education and to become an activist and writer for Latino rights. For the last seven years, he has worked with Christine as a UNI supervisor for student teachers in San Antonio.
>
> Mary Salazar-Guenther is a Mexican American who was raised in Des Moines, Iowa, where there were two Mexican American families in her high school. What she learned of her Mexican American heritage as a child came from her father's parents. Her grandmother spoke only Spanish. She is working now to become a fluent Spanish speaker. Mary now teaches third grade at the UNI Price Laboratory School and has worked in many ways to advance awareness and understanding of Mexican American perspectives.

What we offer here is what we believe will help our students as they begin their own teaching with Latino students. Essentially, this paper contains the syllabus for the course we have developed for our teacher education students, *Studies in Latino Culture for Teachers*. We begin with basic information about who Latinos are. Interestingly enough, most Latino students in our student teachers' classes in San Antonio do not know who they are or the significance of various labels used to name them.

Background: Who are Latinos?

Latinos are typically identified in terms of language, ethnicity, or race. While these concepts are often used interchangeably, language, ethnicity, and race have distinct meanings. Latinos cannot be put in one category in any one of these domains.

Historically, the people, *La Raza*, who are Latinos were created from the encounter of the Spanish with the peoples who lived in what Europeans called the "New World." When the Spanish arrived in the Americas, they met people who were already living here, i.e., Indians, and Africans. The Spanish, unlike the English who colonized in North America, were willing to blend with the people they encountered—legally or illegally—by marriage, cohabitation, or rape. This blending occurred on a massive scale among the races throughout Latin America, over time changing genetics and having an impact on every cultural aspect of Latin American cultures, i.e., music, dance, cuisine, clothing, etc.

Despite this physical blending, however, the Europeans intentionally dominated, subjugating Indians and Africans. In every Latin American country, there developed a social and economic hierarchy with Europeans, those who claimed European descent, and/or those who were visibly of European descent, i.e., white, having the most social and economic power. Mixed peoples, i.e., European and *Indios* (*mestizos*), European and African (*mulattos*), or mixtures of all three, have

become the largest group in the middle. Those who were pure or predominately Indian or African were relegated to the bottom. The legacy of this hierarchy remains today. "Indian" is a derogatory term in Mexico. In Latino magazines in the U.S., faces are more often white or light skinned than dark. Looking at the politicians in Mexico or the news on Mexican television, most leaders appear to be Caucasian.

Every Latin American country's population holds a mixture of the three races. Columbia, Venezuela, and Brazil have all three races about equally represented. Mexico, Peru , Guatemala, and Bolivia are predominately European and Indian while Puerto Rico, Cuba, Dominican Republic, and Panama are predominately European and African.

Hispanic is a term commonly used for Latinos. It literally means "of or a part of Spain; derived from Spain." It carries the connotation of belonging to Spain or the Hispanic, .i.e., Spanish culture, and of speaking Spanish. This term does not acknowledge Indian and African elements or languages different from Spanish, e.g., Portuguese.

In some parts of the United States, New Mexico, for example, those who designate themselves as Hispanic are from families who received land grants from the Spanish king and who are proud of their European/Spanish heritage. These Hispanics are most often Caucasian, and they don't want to be called more inclusive terms, like Latino. In New Mexico, the indigenous Pueblos resisted assimilation and call themselves by their Indian nation name today. Individuals may have Spanish names, but they also have their own Indian names. They do not speak Spanish today but are bilingual in their native languages. Racism in this area of the country is felt between Hispanic and Indian.

Latino comes from the term "Latin America." "Latin" is a European root word that refers to the group of Latin languages, i.e., Spanish, French, Portuguese, Italian, and Romanian. These languages were taken to the colonies of the "New World," which were then peopled by *latinoamericanos*. More accurately a reference to a part of the world, the "Latino" term does affirm the inclusion or blending of the races. It also refers to the *American* experience of peoples whose nations evolved from European colonization.

"Hispanic" and "Latino" are general or generic terms that include a wide variety of national origins. There is great diversity among the many groups of Latinos. Each group has its own national history, cuisine, music, etc. Most Latinos or Hispanics identify themselves by nationality. Those in the United States identify themselves with hyphenated terms, e.g., Mexican-American. In the United States, where immigration is a phenomenon, we use the term "national" to designate someone living in the U.S. but not a U.S. citizen, e.g., Mexican national.

Puerto Rican-American would be redundant, however, since Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens already by virtue of the island's status since 1917, when it became a commonwealth—or colony—of the U.S. Puerto Ricans are persons born and raised in Puerto Rico or born in the continental U.S. and descended from those born and raised in Puerto Rico. All Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens, but Puerto Ricans living in the continental U.S. have more rights that those who reside in Puerto Rico. While all can vote for President, Puerto Rico does not have representation in Congress since it is not a state, so those who reside in Puerto Rico cannot vote for Congressional representation. The quintessential issue for Puerto Ricans is the status of their island. Shall it continue to be a colony or commonwealth, should it become a state, or should it declare independence and become an independent country? Since whether or not it can become a state is actually up to the U.S. Congress, the only change Puerto Ricans have control of is independence.

Mexican-American designates Americans of Mexican descent, but it does not distinguish those who have been living on land in what is now the U.S. for many generations—even before the border was moved north—from those who have recently crossed the border and attained U.S. citizenship.

Chicano is a subset of Mexican-American. Chicanos are Mexican-Americans who are defined by their resistance to assimilation and by a reaffirmation of their racial and cultural heritage which is not European. Use of this term has implications for politics, art, and education. Chicanos want to retain their own languages, i.e., not Spanish, and their own cultural art forms and traditions. Chicanos are often activists who work to exert a voice of some power in the body politic.

A Quick-Start for Teachers: *Studies in Latino Culture*

The one-hour course which is the subject of this paper has evolved to focus on Mexican American culture, and we have renamed the course this year to *Studies in Mexican American Culture for Teachers*. This is because the Latino population in Iowa and in Texas is predominately Mexican American.

Each course session is designed around a topic or a set of questions. While most content is delivered in the class meetings, students are also given materials to read after class, and there is a homework assignment for each class session. The text recommended is *The Mexican American Family Album* (Hoobler and Hoobler, 1994).

This course is continually evolving. It is a work in progress. What follows is a synopsis of each of the five class sessions as they are currently planned.

SESSION ONE: Reaching Latino Students

Questions: Why must teachers and schools develop strategies for Latino students?
What are factors which impact Latino participation and achievement?
What can be done to increase Latino participation and achievement?

The drop-out rate for Latino students is the highest of any minority group. In 1998, the Hispanic Dropout Project of the U.S. Department of Education reported drop-out rates of 30 to 35 percent. In some high schools in Texas, less than half the entering freshman stay in school to graduate as seniors. While drop-out rates are high, achievement scores tend to be among the lowest of any school population.

According to the President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans (1996), factors which affect Latino American educational attainment include:

- Inequity in school finance
- School segregation and poverty
- Underrepresentation of Latinos among school personnel
- Lack of multicultural training for school personnel
- Lack of bilingual and ESL programs
- Misplacement of students in special education classes
- Testing and assessment policies and procedures
- Underutilization of technology
- Low parent involvement

- Lack of school safety

Of the following seven strategies to support a culturally responsive pedagogy (Jackson, 1993/94), some strategies we recognize as good for everyone; but to implement some, teachers need more specific knowledge in order to implement them effectively for Latino populations?

- Build trust
- Become culturally literate
- Build a repertoire of instructional strategies
- Use effective questioning techniques
- Provide effective feedback
- Analyze instructional materials
- Establish positive home-school relations

Some specifics to implement these strategies are recommended (Jackson, 1993-94). These are among them:

- Build trust by learning students' names and pronouncing them correctly.
- Build trust by having students research and share information about their family's ethnic background.
- Become culturally literate by visiting community organizations and events, i.e., churches, plays, celebrations, reading, etc., and/or by making home visits.
- Prepare for students who may be more field dependent, who process information in nonlinear ways, tend to be physically active, and/or may value group affiliation above individual competitiveness.
- Make explicit underlying thought processes and assumptions used in particular activities.
- Analyze instructional materials to achieve the following (Banks, 1981):
    1. Accurate portrayal of the perspectives, attitudes, and feelings
    2. Inclusion of strong Latino characters
    3. Exclusion of racist concepts and stereotypes
    4. Historical accuracy and representation of Latino perspectives
- To establish positive home-school relations, i.e., be proactive with positive contacts and information to parents.

Recommendations from the Hispanic Dropout Project (U.S. Department of Education) ask us to:

- Provide each student with someone who understands how schools work and who is willing to take personal responsibility for ensuring the student's success.
- Provide a high quality education so that students learn to read by the end of third grade, experience relevant and interesting curricula, and learn to make informed decisions.
- Provide schools and classrooms which are safe, healthy, free from intimidation, and which are inviting to Latinos, i.e., where their language and culture are treated as resources.

The Department of Education's Hispanic Dropout Project as well as a plethora of other reports and recommendations for effective educational programs and practices for Latino students can be found at http://www.ncbe.gwu.edu/library/edpro.htm

Handout: "No More Excuses, Hispanic Dropout Project" (U.S. Deparatment of Education)
"Seven Strategies to Support a Culturally Responsive Pedagogy" (Jackson, 1993/94)

Assignment: Write a reflection about what things particular to Hispanic students you may need to do in your student teaching assignment.

SESSON TWO: Mexican and Mexican American Culture...Holidays, Food, Art, and Music

The following holidays/events are introduced and discussed with appropriate activities to teach and/or include them in elementary and secondary classrooms:

- Dies y Seiz (Declaration of Mexican Independence, September 16)
- Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead, November 2)
- Our Lady of Guadalupe (December 12)
- *Las Posadas* (Journey of Mary and Joseph to find shelter, Christmastime)
- *Dia de los Tres Reyes* (Twelfth Day, January 6)
- Cinco de Mayo (Mexican victory over the French, May 5)
- *Quinceanera* (Rite of passage for young woman, celebration of her 15th birthday)

Specialty foods introduced include:

- *Tamales*
- *Pan de* muertos (dead bread)
- *Marzan* (Three Kings Cake)
- *Tortillas*
- *Enchiladas, burritos, fajitas, tacos y mas*

Artists and art forms may include:

- Diego Rivera
- Carmen Lomas Garza
- Frida Kahlo
- *Pinatas*
- *Cascaronnes*
- God's Eye
- Yarn work
- *Papel Picado*
- Tissue flower papers
- *Ofrenda (a Day of the Ded a*ltar)

Music can include:

- Mariachi
- Tejano

Resources: *Fiesta!* (Silverthorne, 1992)
Kids Explore America's Hispanic Heritage (Westridge Young Writers..., 1996)

Handout: Various

Assignment: Write a reflection in which you list and/or discuss your plans for incorporating the information presented in your future teaching?

SESSION THREE: Literature for Students and Teachers/Exemplary Authors, Books, and Activities

The following authors are among those who depict the many cultural legacies of the Mexican American and promote discussions of issues that will lead to an awareness and understanding of this culture. A selections of books is presented in class.

- Gary Soto
- Geroge Ancona
- Carmen Lomas Garza
- Sandra Cisneros
- Gloria Anzaldua
- Rudolfo Anaya
- Pat Mora

Handouts: "Developing and Awareness of Mexican and Mexican American Culture through Children's Literature" (Salazar de Guenther and Yokota, 1992))

Bibliography of children's literature

Field Trip: *Hacienda de Glorias* (Mexican restaurant/*cantina*)

Assignments: Create a lesson plan or book activity; include author information.

Write a reflection about some personal connection(s) you made with the books presented in class or books or stories you read/review on your own.

SESSION FOUR: Mexican American Historical Perspectives and Mexican American Heroes

Thinking about historical perspectives, Mexican and Mexican American perspectives are often missing from the history typically included school curricula and textbooks. These perspectives include:

- Indigenous perspectives associated with their encounter with the Spanish
- Instances of American imperialism
- The Chicano Movement

An initial list of Latino heroes and role models might include:

- Cesar Chavez — Labor/civil rights leader
- Vilma Martinez — Won rights for elementary bilingual education
- Sandra Cisneros — Author who attended Iowa Writer's Workshop
- Diego Rivera — Created murals about Mexican history
- Henry Cisneros — First Hispanic mayor in major U.S. city
- Loretta Sanchez — First Mexican-American U.S. Congresswoman
- Rigoberta Menchu — Nobel Peace Prize for work with Indians in Guatemala
- Dolores Huerta — Chicana activist with United Farm Workers' AFL-CIO
- Maria Irene Fornes — First Latina playwright to win an Obie Award
- Lupe Serrano — First Hispanic principal dancer with American Ballet Theater
- Babriela Mistral — Latin American's first Nobel Prize winner (poetry)
- Josefina Sierro — Began "underground railroad" to return Mexican Americans
- Soledad C. Chacon — First Latina to win state office, New Mexico secretary of state

Resources: *The Mexican American Family Album* (Hoobler and Hoobler, 1994)

Lies My Teacher Told Me (Loewen, 1995)
Rethinking Columbus (Bigelow and Peterson, 1998)
Beyond Heroes and Holidays (Lee, Menkart, and Okazawa-Rey, 1998)
"Latinos in the U.S.A." (Scholastic, 1999)
Kids Explore America's Hispanic Heritage (Westridge Young Writers..., 1996)

Assignments: Create a bulletin board display highlighting a Mexican American leader/role model.

Write a reflection on what was missing from your education with regard to Mexican American perspectives and how you can correct that omission in your own teaching.

SESSION FIVE: Bilingual Education and Other Critical Issues

While teachers may not be directly involved with Spanish dominant or students whose second language is English, it is good for them to know the issues related to bilingual education and the characteristics of exemplary bilingual and ESL programs.

Basic concepts about language relevant to bilingual/ESL education (Ortiz, 2000) include:

- Students need a high level of competence in at least one language to be academically successful.
- The native language is the foundation upon which English is built.
- Parent, and students, should be encourages to use their native language.
- English as a second language acquisition is a developmental process and so you cannot hasten it.
- It takes children in bilingual education programs 5-7 years to achieve English academic language proficiency.
- Students in ESL programs may need as long as 8-10 years to acquire native language English skills.
- Instruction should emphasize natural language acquisition.

The most effective instructional strategies for language minority students have these characteristics (Ortiz, 2000):

- The teacher is a facilitator of learning.
- The teacher provides instruction in the native language and/or comprehensible input to facilitate second language acquisition.
- There is an emphasis on genuine dialogue.
- Language is taught across the curriculum.
- Instruction is culturally relevant.
- The teacher emphasizes collaborative learning in heterogeneous groups.
- Instruction focuses on higher order thinking, problem-solving, and creativity.
- Basic skill instruction is integrated within higher order skills.
- Intrinsic motivation is emphasized.

Handouts: "Helping Non-Native English Speakers with Reading" (Opitz, 1998)

Resources: National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE),
www.latinousa.org/LUSAhotlist.html

Other, sometimes related, issues discussed in this session include:

- Inviting and maintaining parent involvement
- Establishing trust relationships in the Latino community
- Changing the status quo in the curricula and in school practices
- Social and economic justice for Latinos
- Learning what you need to know

Students are encouraged to identify Internet and community resources to help them build on the beginning knowledge they have gained with regard to Latino and/or Mexican American culture. They arrange a field trip to a nearby school with an exemplary bilingual or ESL program for Latino students. Various media presentations are also recommended, such as "American Family" on PBS, *My Family/Mia Familia* and *Stand and* Deliver videos, or the play "Latins Anonymous."

Field Trip: Field trip to Marshalltown Woodbury Elementary School

Assignment: Write a reflection about any issue(s) for you as you think about teaching for and about Mexican Americans. What was most useful for you in this course? What suggestions do you have, if any, for improving the course?

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